

**National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594**

Brief of Accident

Adopted 04/01/2003

DEN02LA090 File No. 12759	08/10/2002	Victor, CO	Aircraft Reg No. N222SH	Time (Local): 20:40 MDT		
Make/Model:	Piper / PA-32-260			Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Engine Make/Model:	Lycoming / O-540-E4B5		Crew	0	1	0
Aircraft Damage:	Substantial		Pass	0	0	2
Number of Engines:	1					
Operating Certificate(s):	None					
Type of Flight Operation:	Personal					
Reg. Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation					
Last Depart. Point: Laughlin, NV				Condition of Light: Day		
Destination: Colorado Sprngs, CO				Weather Info Src: Weather Observation Facility		
Airport Proximity: Off Airport/Airstrip				Basic Weather: Visual Conditions		
				Lowest Ceiling: None		
				Visibility: 10.00 SM		
				Wind Dir/Speed: 140 / 014 Kts		
				Temperature (°C): 24		
				Precip/Obscuration: None / None		
Pilot-in-Command	Age: 54			Flight Time (Hours)		
Certificate(s)/Rating(s)				Total All Aircraft: 2500		
Private; Single-engine Land				Last 90 Days: 60		
Instrument Ratings				Total Make/Model: 300		
None				Total Instrument Time: UnK/Nr		

The airplane was fueled to capacity (25 gallons each, left and right main tanks; 17 gallons each, left and right auxiliary tanks; total, 84 gallons) prior to departure. The airplane was airborne for 4 hours, 10 minutes, when it "began to feel heavy and mushy." Two passengers were repositioned, but the airplane "continued to feel heavy with loss of altitude and stall light flashing." The engine began to "miss," and "appeared not to have power." The pilot flew towards a low spot in a bowl, hoping to get to a lower elevation. He made a forced landing in an area "that looked flat and soft." Witnesses saw the airplane bounce three times and the left wing break off as it spun to a stop. Numerous empty beer cans (about two 12 packs) were found in the airplane. The pilot said his male passenger had consumed the beer. The fuel selector was found positioned on the right main tank. The salvage company said the right tanks appeared to be empty and there was "very little" fuel in the separated left wing tanks. They drained 2 gallons of fuel from the right main tank and about 3 gallons from the right auxiliary tank. No fuel was recovered from the separated left wing's tanks. The carburetor bowl was opened and found to be dry. In addition, no fuel was found in the line between the engine-driven fuel pump and the carburetor. The magnetos were tested and functioned normally. Both the engine-driven fuel pump and auxiliary boost pumps were dry but tested satisfactorily. The pilot's toxicological report was negative for ethanol, but positive for benzodiazepines. The pilot told the hospital physician that he was taking Paxil for treatment of depression. According to an FAA Civil Aeromedical Institute (CAMI) toxicologist, Paxil is a benzodiazepine and is contraindicated for flying.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. (C) FLUID,FUEL - EXHAUSTION
2. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) USE OF INAPPROPRIATE MEDICATION/DRUG - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Occurrence #3: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Findings

4. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - NONE SUITABLE

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.
the pilot's failure to refuel, resulting in fuel exhaustion and a subsequent loss of engine power. Contributing factors were the pilot's use of inappropriate medication, and the unsuitable terrain on which to make a forced landing.